

The Campaign to create a Coastal Park Griswold Airport Land

THE FACTS

LOCATION

Madison, Connecticut

SIZE

42 acres

BENEFITS

Water quality protection for Hammonasset River and Long Island Sound

Public access and trails

Recreational fields

Buffer for Hammonasset Marsh

Habitat for Saltmarsh Sparrow

Protection of globally Important Bird Area

Coastal grassland restoration

Coastal forest conservation

PARTNERS

The Town of Madison

Stop Griswold Over Development

Audubon Connecticut

The Trust for Public Land

SUPPORTERS

Madison Land Conservation Trust

Rivers Alliance

Friends of Hammonasset State Park

Citizens for a Clean Hammonasset River

Connecticut Ornithological Association

THE OPPORTUNITY

The current agreement to conserve the 42-acre former Griswold Airport property offers the Town of Madison a one-time opportunity for an iconic Town park. In its present ecological state, the land hosts highly valuable natural resources, including frontage on the Hammonasset River, extensive tidal wetlands, native coastal grasslands, and connectivity to Hammonasset Beach State Park. These features make the property an exciting open space, easily accessible from the Post Road.

We must act now to seize this opportunity to protect the wetlands, River and Long Island Sound and to create a park for the Town of Madison. Inaction will result in dense residential development and the land will be lost *forever*.

The Trust Public Land (TPL) has contracted with the developer of the property, Leyland Alliance, to purchase the land by April 1, 2010. We need to raise \$11 million to do so. While the majority of the funds for purchase would come from a bond issue in the amount of \$9 million by the Town of Madison, and would be supplemented with state and federal grants to the extent possible, we also need to raise \$2 million in private funds from generous donors in Madison and beyond to complete the deal.

Photos: J. Avery Wham

THE TRUST *for* PUBLIC LAND
CONSERVING LAND FOR PEOPLE

 Audubon CONNECTICUT

A New Future for the Griswold Airport Land

CRITICAL BIRD HABITAT

The Hammonasset/Hammock River estuary, including the State Park and Griswold Airport property, has been recognized as an Important Bird Area of global significance due to the large nesting population of Saltmarsh Sparrows. This marsh system hosts among the highest nesting densities of this species documented anywhere in the world. The Saltmarsh Sparrow is a species of high global conservation concern, listed as globally 'Vulnerable' by BirdLife International and at high risk of extinction, primarily as a result of rising sea levels and the highly developed nature of the landscape in which it is found. These birds only nest in the high tidal marshes found from Maine to Virginia, and its entire available nesting habitat is smaller in area than the State of Connecticut.



Saltmarsh Sparrow

Photo: Paul Fusco



A New Future for the Griswold Airport Land

THE VISION

The town has an opportunity to create a unique community asset. The property shares a significant wetland border with the Hammonasset Beach State Park, thereby providing a buffer for the wildlife and vegetation that thrive there. The goal is to maintain the majority of the land, approximately 60-70% as open space, including upland forest, wetlands and the area along the river with walking trails throughout. The plan is to restore a portion of the coastal grassland area proximate to the wetland to enhance the habitat for the wide variety of birds that utilize this area. The portion of the property closest to the Post Road could support several recreational fields for use by Town residents, comprising approximately 20-30% of the site. In addition, there is an area on the River that is conducive to a kayak and canoe launch should the Town decide on this option. There will be a small parcel, about 5-10% of the total acreage, that would be reserved for potential compatible commercial use.



THE RESOURCE VALUES

- ◆ One of the last open spaces remaining South of the Post Road
- ◆ 10 acres of prime wetlands
- ◆ Remnant native coastal forest
- ◆ 450 feet of frontage along the Hammonasset River
- ◆ 2,000 feet of adjacent wetland border with Hammonasset Beach State Park
- ◆ Critical habitat for migratory birds
- ◆ Recognized globally Important Bird Area
- ◆ Fifteen state-listed species of birds, one species of global concern
- ◆ Protection of water quality of Long Island Sound
- ◆ Nursery protection for finfish and shellfish

THE THREAT

If we are unable to raise the funds for the purchase of the land, it will be developed with 127 units of active adult housing, virtually creating a new village in Madison. This will include a very large public septic system. The construction and development on this land will cause irreparable damage to the natural resources and will severely impact the Hammonasset River and waters of Long Island Sound. The natural buffers that exist now will no longer function adequately, and will create new impervious surfaces on the site. The entire ecological system will be damaged.



Griswold Airport at center, encompassed on three sides by Hammonasset State Beach Park, River, and associated wetlands.

University of Connecticut



The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national nonprofit organization with an office in New Haven, works with others to conserve land for people to enjoy as working landscapes, parks, gardens, and natural areas, ensuring livable communities for

generations to come. TPL's Connecticut program has protected more than 6,000 acres of open space, watershed land, working farms and forestland, and historic resources in more than 40 communities across the state. For more information, please www.tpl.org/connecticut.



Audubon Connecticut (AC) is the state office of the National Audubon Society, linking crucial national conservation initiatives with the interests and concerns of local communities. Audubon Connecticut's mission is to further protection of birds, other wildlife and their habitats through science, education, advocacy and conservation, for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. Audubon Connecticut operates from its Centers and sanctuaries which protect more than 4,500 acres of pristine habitat across the state. AC works in collaboration with individuals and organizations to preserve Connecticut's rich and diverse natural heritage for generations to come. www.ct.audubon.org

Griswold Airport Land

Keystone to a Globally Important Ecosystem



Saltmarsh Sparrow



Hudsonian Godwit



Seaside Sparrow

Photos: Paul Fusco

Keystone Parcel

An ecological gem in its own right, the 42-acre site of the former Griswold Airport is a key component of the globally significant Hammonasset Beach State Park ecosystem.

Habitat for Federal and State Listed Species

Griswold Airport and the Hammonasset Beach State Park area are important to a wide variety of nesting, migrating, and wintering birds with nearly 300 species having been recorded there. The area has been recognized as a globally Important Bird Area because of its large nesting population of Saltmarsh Sparrow. The federally threatened Piping Plover nests on the beach strand habitat at the mouth of the river, along with the state threatened Least Tern and state special concern species, American Oystercatcher. The mouth of the Hammonasset River serves as a foraging area for the federally endangered Roseate tern. Several species of wading birds use the marsh as foraging habitat in the nesting and post-nesting dispersal seasons, including large numbers of the state-threatened Snowy and Great Egrets.

A Place for Wildlife and People

The Place: Hammonasset Beach State Park is Connecticut's most popular state park and the Hammonasset/ Hammock River estuary is among the most productive in the state. Protecting the significant and unique natural features of Griswold Airport that borders the estuary will provide a buffer for the wildlife and plant species that thrive in this area, while also ensuring opportunities for the landward migration of marsh habitat in the face of sea level rise.

The Vision: A coastal park at Griswold Airport will serve as an inviting gateway to the natural world for the thousands of people utilizing its recreational fields, enhance the popularity of the Airport site and State Park as a destination for birders from all over the northeast, and introduce countless people to the wonders of nature. The park will offer a significant (10 plus acre) area of rare native warm season grassland with trails leading to the coastal forest and marsh overlooks. The existing natural prairie will transition into an area of enhanced habitat for migrants and butterflies, including wildflower meadows, feed plots for seed eating birds, and bird and butterfly gardens, as well as bluebird nest boxes and Purple Martin nesting structures. The park will also offer access to and views of the highly productive upper reaches of the tidal marsh, providing glimpses of Great and Snowy Egret, American Bittern, and King Rail.

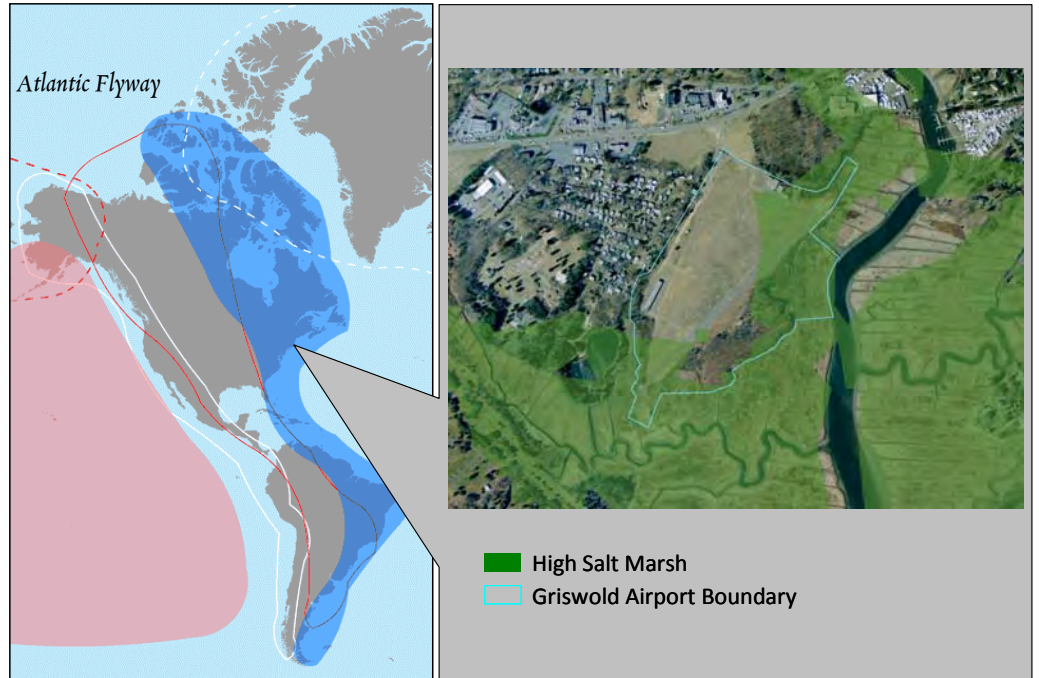
The Plan: Once acquired, the Town of Madison will convene a committee to develop a mixed-use plan for the property that will permanently protect the majority of the land, approximately 60-70% of the acreage including upland forest, wetlands, and the area along the river, as open space complete with walking trails, allow 20-30% to be developed as organically-managed athletic fields, and consider utilizing 5-10% of the acreage for commercial use.



Roseate Tern Photo: AJ Hand

Important Stopover on Atlantic Flyway

The Griswold Airport land and Hammonasset ecosystem lie within the eastern flyway, serving as a critical rest stop for birds as they travel to and from nesting areas in Canada and wintering grounds as far away as South America. Such undeveloped coastal habitat is particularly significant for migrating birds because they avoid flying over water as much as possible. As a result of its strategic location, more than 300 bird species have been recorded in the Hammonasset ecosystem. The wide diversity of habitats present at the Griswold Airport property means that no matter what habitat a migrant bird requires, it will find the food and shelter it needs at this site to continue its perilous journey.



Bird Diversity

The Griswold Airport/Hammonasset marsh has yielded the second highest banding total of Northern Harriers of any site in North America. Due to the park's coastal location, it provides important migratory stopover habitat for landbirds, shorebirds, and raptors. Wooded areas of the Park, including Willard's Island and the upland forest of the Griswold Airport land, are frequented by migratory landbirds in both the spring and fall migration. There is also significant shorebird stopover habitat available, particularly for grassland species, including Killdeer, American Kestrel, Black-bellied and American Golden Plover, and Pectoral, Buff-breasted, and Upland Sandpipers. The area has been the site of a raptor banding station for several years due to the significant raptor use of the Park and Airport property. Cedars, other evergreens, and shrub habitat offer significant roosting habitat for migrating owls, such as Saw-whet, Short-eared and Long-eared species. The Park is a regionally important wintering/migration habitat for open country songbirds such as Snow Bunting and Horned Lark. The marsh is also a regionally significant wintering/migration area for American Bittern, and a nesting area for Osprey.

For more information contact
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The Campaign to create a Coastal Park Griswold Airport Land



WAYS TO GIVE

Gifts of Cash

All gifts payable to **The Trust for Public Land** should be mailed along with this contribution form to:

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Boston, MA 02108

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Gifts of Stock

A donation of appreciated securities can have many financial benefits for the donor. If you prefer to make a gift of appreciated stock, please contact Patti Murray at 617-371-0560.

All donations to "The Campaign to Create a Coastal Park, Griswold Airport Land" are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

For questions or information about the campaign, please contact:

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**The funds will be used for the acquisition and protection of the former Griswold Airport,
and for associated campaign and program costs.**

**Please make your check payable to The Trust for Public Land and indicate
"Griswold Airport Land" on your check.**

Mail this form with your check to
The Trust for Public Land
33 Union Street, 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02108

The Trust for Public Land's taxpayer ID# is 23-7222333.

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